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# Land, Agriculture and Unfinished Decolonization in Africa: Essays in Honour of Sam Moyo: Editors' Preface

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CITATION:

CHITONGE, Horman ...[et al]. Land, Agriculture and Unfinished Decolonization in Africa: Essays in Honour of Sam Moyo: Editors' Preface. African study monographs. Supplementary issue 2018, 57: 1-3

ISSUE DATE:

2018-06

URL:

<https://doi.org/10.14989/233005>

RIGHT:

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## LAND, AGRICULTURE AND UNFINISHED DECOLONIZATION IN AFRICA: ESSAYS IN HONOUR OF SAM MOYO— EDITORS' PREFACE

This collection of papers is dedicated to the memory of the late Professor Sam Moyo, a distinguished Zimbabwean social scientist and dedicated activist for agrarian and land issues in Africa. In our rapidly globalizing world, the contradictions of capital accumulation are intensified in the countryside. After centuries of imperial conquest and colonial domination, the African continent is suffering a renewed onslaught of land grabbing and the plunder of natural resources as well as the perpetuation of the distorted economic structures that originated in the colonial times. Sam was an intellectual champion in the struggle to overcome all these historical injustices.

Sam was President of the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) from 2008 to 2011. He was also Founding Executive Director of the Harare-based African Institute for Agrarian Studies (AIAS) and Editor-in-Chief of the Sage journal, *Agrarian South*. His books, such as *Reclaiming the Land* (co-edited with Paris Yeros, Zed Books, 2005) and *Reclaiming the Nation* (co-edited with Paris Yeros, Pluto Press, 2011), found a large and enthusiastic readership. While outside pundits oscillated between Afro-pessimism and Afro-optimism, Sam was consistently cautious about the effects of the neoliberal assault on Africa and wanted to be instrumental in forging a genuine alliance of progressive forces across the continent and worldwide. As a dedicated scholar, his analysis was always based on hard facts and evidence collected in the field, especially in rural Zimbabwe.

In 2011, a group of Japanese scholars of African studies at Kyoto University proposed a collaborative study involving both African and Japanese scholars around the concept of “African Potentials.” This idea refers to the capabilities of Africans to resolve contradictions among people utilizing indigenous knowledge and institutions that are often embedded in local village contexts. This project focused upon the realities of everyday life of ordinary Africans as well as the dialectic interactions between insiders and outsiders. The project, under the leadership of Itaru Ohta of Kyoto University, received funding from the Japanese Ministry of Education.

Upon the formal launch of the project, the group approached Sam, who showed great interest in the “African Potentials” concept and in collaboration with Asian scholars. He hosted the Southern African regional forum of the project in Harare in 2012. Eventually, a collection of the papers submitted to the forum was published as *What Colonialism Ignored: “African Potentials” for Resolving Conflicts in Southern Africa* (co-edited with Yoichi Mine, Langaa RPCIG, 2016). The chapters of the book provided a variety of impressive

examples of “African Potentials:” land reform in Zimbabwe and its social ramifications, villagers’ reactions to the land grabbing in Zambia, a reinterpretation of Namibian history from a comparative perspective, the experience of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa, and the importance of people’s palaver (casual talk) in emancipatory politics (see Lyn Ossome’s book review, *Agrarian South*, Vol. 5, Issue 2–3, 2016, pp. 328–334). While preparing the volume of forum papers, Sam spent a month as Visiting Professor at Kyoto University in 2015 and discussed the prospects for future collaboration between African and Asian scholars. However, Sam was involved in a terrible traffic accident in New Delhi, India, and he passed away on November 22, 2015. The book was published posthumously.

The “African Potentials” team pledged to carry out the task Sam had undertaken. Sam had invited two distinguished South African scholars into the scholarly network for “African Potentials:” Francis Nyamnjoh of the University of Cape Town and Michael Neocosmos of Rhodes University. Thanks to Francis’ work, the Centre for African Studies at the University of Cape Town hosted a colloquium in honour of Professor Sam Moyo on November 28–29, 2016, under the directorship of Lungisile Ntsebeza. This gathering was organized under the name, “Land, the State and Decolonising the Agrarian Structure in Africa,” and it was supported by the successor project of “African Potentials,” headed by Motoji Matsuda, with the Centre for African Area Studies, Kyoto University. About fifty colloquium participants, many of whom were international scholars and students, discussed Sam’s legacy in the context of the unfinished decolonization of Southern Africa. Lungisile’s keynote address was entitled, “Sam Moyo’s Reading of Mafeje: A Tribute.” Archie Mafeje was a South Africa-born pioneer scholar of agrarian studies and a cosmopolitan pan-Africanist for whom Sam had great esteem. The colloquium took place in the vortex of the #FeesMustFall student campaign, which was sweeping university campuses all over South Africa.

The #FeesMustFall was a spinoff of the #RhodesMustFall campaign, which started at the University of Cape Town in 2015 and spread to other universities in South Africa. In addition to campaigning for free education, students in the #FeesMustFall movement called for the decolonisation of the university curriculum, not just in South Africa but also across the rest of the African Continent. While the students have not yet articulated what exactly is involved in this goal, or what it entails, they are clear that the current curriculum undermines African experiences and knowledge. They are calling for a decolonised curriculum, which they expect to promote Africa-centred teaching and learning. The campaign to decolonise the curriculum has continued, and it has brought the discourse of decolonisation back to the South African scholarship agenda. Horman Chitonge’s article presented at this colloquium expands on the theme of decolonisation and its practical implications for Africa today.

This supplementary issue is a collection of reworked papers read at the colloquium. The paper on “African Potentials” written by Sam and Yoichi is followed by original contributions, which are sorted in alphabetical order of the authors’ names. Five papers that shed light upon various aspects of the land

and agrarian question in Africa (by Peter Lawrence, Rangarirai Gavin Muchetu, Shuichi Oyama, Yumi Sakata, and Chizuko Sato) are flanked by Chitonge's continental discussion of decolonisation and Zhang Zhenke and Jianqin Li's discussion of the lessons of Chinese agrarian development for Africa.

The people who provided the financial resources to host the conference should be recognized without fail. We received funding from the African Potential Project (the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science, Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research (S) "African Potential" and Overcoming the Difficulties of Modern World: Comprehensive Research That Will Provide a New Perspective for the Future of Humanity' KAKENHI 16H06318 headed by Motoji Matsuda, Kyoto University) and from the University of Cape Town's Research Office (URC). We would like to express our deep gratitude to the scholars at the conference's host institution, the University of Cape Town, including Shamil Jeppie, Lungisile, and Francis. Last but not least, we thank Walter Chambati, Deputy Director of the Sam Moyo African Institute for Agrarian Studies (SMAIAS), and Qondile Moyo, Sam's daughter, for delivering a powerful summary and interpretation of Sam's work and life. Our warm thanks also go to Dr. Masaya Hara for his professional editorial assistance.

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